

Order out of Chaos – Toward A Christian Theology of Organizing

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A man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving....A society is alienated if its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish....solidarity between people. (Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus)

From the assignment of duties to the first humans in the Garden of Eden, to the unfettered coordination of construction tasks in building the Tower of Babel, to the delegation of management and troubleshooting authority by Moses at Jethro's urging, humans have organized their efforts in ways that have reduced effort, gained efficiencies, and made possible amazing feats that would be impossible absent organizing activities. Modern military and corporate entities would not be possible without the organizing work of managers, entrepreneurs, and employees. From multi-national corporations to churches, non-profit relief agencies to soccer clubs and universities, humans organize in all aspects of life.....

Any Christian theological work must stem from an underlying assumption that is understood by the majority of Christians, and that is particularly relevant to a Christian worldview. We take as our underlying assumption that humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, etc.). The *imago dei* has three major perspectives, all three of which illuminate our understanding of organizing.

When we speak of organizing, we refer to the act of exerting control and coordination over a specific set of resources. Organizational scholar Karl Weick has written extensively on the concept of "organizing" (e.g. 1979). Weick notes that organizational theorizing, such as we are doing herein, must cultivate interest among an intended audience. In so doing, it is especially important that the scholar's theorizing challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about the subject at hand. Accordingly, our model challenges certain important assumptions that guide modern thinking about organizing, especially in the business arena. Among these assumptions is the idea

that modern organizational structures ought to be judged primarily on the basis of their ability to bring about economic efficiency and productivity, consistent with modern capitalist notions of materialism, individualism, and economic rationality.

Rather, we will suggest that, from a Christian theological perspective, organizing best captures God's intent and design when structures promote human development in terms of relationships, community, and the common good. Nothing in our model challenges the inherent goodness of economic efficiency, nor does it deny the efficacy of modern capitalist institutions to bring about positive social outcomes. Rather, as we will make more clear, we believe that certain elements of modern organizational structures promote the treatment of humans as means to economic ends, rather than as the primary ends of the productive process itself – as productive inputs rather than productive outputs.

Our proposed theology of organizing is, of course, intentionally not comprehensive. It is certainly not intended to be the final word on organizing – it is intended to place this important subject in the arena of theology for future consideration.

We begin our discussion by considering what we mean when we speak of organizing as a central human activity. We next state the reasons we believe a theological exploration of organizing is valuable, and lay out our critical theological pre-suppositions. These pre-suppositions create the logical boundaries of our understanding of organizing. In this process, we will explore the Christian understanding of humans created in the image of a loving God – or *imago dei*. We move next to the specific implications of *imago dei* on human organizing. Our paper then

considers what this perspective means for organizers, such as managers. Finally, we discuss how future research might build on the present model.

Organizing as a central human activity

The primary emphasis of this paper is on organizing activities that lead to

What if an individual organizational management scholar got together with another management scholar (*an organizing activity*) to write a paper on organizing? Why would they do such a thing? And what if these two scholars got together with other management (or business) scholars who were writing other management (or business) papers (*an organizing activity*) that considered a particular theology (*an organizing activity*), and what if they combined their efforts and thoughts to develop a series of papers addressing various management subjects from that theological viewpoint(*an organizing activity*)? And then, what if those scholars convened a meeting (*an organizing activity*) in Dayton, Ohio so as to include other business scholars (*an organizing activity*) in a way that promotes cross-fertilization of ideas, networking of like-minded people, and mutual education? And what if the papers these scholars develop were collected, edited, and published in some outlet (*an organizing activity*) that made them available for dissemination to a wider audience?

At each step in this hypothetical (and real) scenario, organizing activities have occurred that, presumably, have made the task activities of the participants more valuable, and more enjoyable. In essence, organizing efforts such as that described are aimed at both reducing the uncertainty humans face in a hostile earthly environment, and at overcoming the difficulties of the human existence in that environment. In this sense, organizing consists of collective sense-

making, and directed coordination activities. Organizing is active, it is not passive, although it may benefit from some passive elements. Ultimately, all organizing involves those activities that lead to better control and coordination of environmental factors in the pursuit of uncertainty reduction and the enactment of a perceived better existence. Or, as Weick describes it, organizing is a “consensually validated grammar for reducing equivocality by means of sensible, interlocked behaviors” (1979: 3). In addressing organizing of economic activities, (Martinez, 2006) writes,

That economic markets arise as a solution to trade and exchange problems is also well-known. Faced with the chaotic tendency of nature unattended, market actors, and people in general, work toward a certain orderliness in their activities. To some extent, while this economy of action may be aimed at reducing the physical and mental labor of their efforts, market actors are also interested in minimizing the other costs associated with production, so as to maximize the return on such efforts. While the rise of economic markets, the organizing of firms, the emergence of governance structures, and the specialization of productive tasks represent an almost infinite regression of orderliness, these are but means to an efficient end. That is, in a teleological sense, efficiency of scarce resources – time, capital, effort, materiel – seems to be inarguably an outcome that is beneficial to most market actors. In this context, it is hardly surprising that economic actors seek to bring some order out of chaos.

As we proceed in considering how Christian theology may inform our understanding of these efforts, we recognize that organizing is a broad concept that applies to many different levels of analysis (e.g. global, social, familial, firm, etc.). These levels will be recognized where appropriate.

Why a Theological Treatment?

The fact is, little analysis of organizational processes has been conducted with a theological lens in recent decades. More specifically, a Christian perspective on social science subjects may be a rich and important contribution. Historian and philosopher George Marsden notes that....

In the past century, sociologist Max Weber (1958, 1964) pointed out the primary influence of a Protestant Christian motivation on the development and design of industrial organizations....Theologian Miroslav Volf (1991) explored in great detail the theological implications of modern work arrangements.....

Creation, Fall, Redemption – One very useful and powerful model for understanding any subject from a Christian perspective stems from the Reformed intellectual tradition. Reformed thinkers note that humans beings have experienced three critical processes that define human existence – the Creation by God of all things, the subsequent Fall of humans into sin and its consequences, and the ultimate Redemption of fallen humans by God’s grace and Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Without delivering a misplaced theological treatise, we provide below a basic summary of this important model of Christian thinking.

In the Genesis account of God’s creative acts, it is revealing to notice that God did several things at the same time: He MADE mankind (creature); He made mankind out of DUST (material creature); He made humans in His OWN IMAGE (Imago Dei); He BREATHED LIFE into humankind (transcendence); and He made humans male and female (social, interdependent, interpersonal). At some point thereafter, humans defied God’s authority by breaking the one rule He imposed. In so doing, humans asserted authority and claimed knowledge for themselves; as a result of their disobedience, they were cursed and banished. Nonetheless, ever since, God has put into action His plan to rescue and restore humanity into relationship with Himself: He sent prophets; He made a covenant with the people of Israel; He provided for His “chosen people;” He sent His Son; He died on the cross; He rose from the grave; His Holy Spirit is at work today

in the hearts and lives of those who otherwise would reject Him. This is the essence of a Christian understanding of God's grace in redeeming a fallen humanity.

Creation and the three primary views of imago dei. George Marsden (1997) notes that, while Christian thinkers will not all agree on all aspects of the faith, certain concepts are practically universal across Christian believers and groups. One such concept is that of the divine creation of all matter. This understanding stems primarily from the Genesis account of beginnings in scripture. Perhaps the most critical aspect of the Genesis account of creation is its emphasis on the *nature* of the human beings God created. In essence, scripture states, and Christians believe, that God created humans in His own image (e.g. Gen. 1:26-27). While this is appreciated almost universally among Christians, there are at least three major perspectives on what this means – the *Substantive view*, which places an emphasis on human attributes that reflect God's image and nature; the *Relational view* of imago dei, which emphasizes the relational nature of God and the primacy of relationships among His people; and the *Functional view* of imago dei, which places emphasis on the work that God has begun in His creation, and in which He expects humans to participate as partners, children, and co-laborers. Taken together, these three perspectives are powerful explanations of the human experience in general, and of human organizing in particular.

Humanity's Fall into sin. Although created in God's image, humans were designed by God to be relatively limited in certain ways. The Genesis account points out specifically humans' limited knowledge about the full range of good and evil in the created realm. In response to these inherent limitations, we are given account of mankind's willful rebellion against God's one original commandment and the subsequent abuse and corruption of the God-given *Imago Dei*

capabilities. In consequence of this rebellion, people not only discovered their nakedness, but their separateness (thus they thwarted and denied their own relational nature). They felt ashamed. They hid from God. They tried to shirk responsibility and blame their actions upon others (Adam upon Eve, Eve upon the serpent). They were forever-onward confronted with the choice of whether to use their abilities for good or evil.

God's Redemptive work on behalf of a rebellious people. God's redemptive efforts impact all 3 components of the Imago Dei: Christ's life, death and resurrection accomplish the restoration of relatedness, the fulfillment of substantive dimensions of God's image, and bring about functional alignment. To be "redeemed" is not merely to be "saved" as an individual from the eternal consequences of sin and rebellion against God – His intent was not to simply create a population of "good" or "forgiven" people, each still an autonomous little monarchy of his own destiny – but to be re-connected and re-integrated into the fellowship of saints, the body of Christ, the people of God¹.

Organizing in the Image of God

While the imago dei is a powerful concept that is central to a Christian understanding of life, it is only discussed directly in scripture a few times. In Genesis 1: 26-27, we are told that,

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

¹ Interestingly, the Redemptive story seems to have moved through 3 different phases: the individual redemption era of Cain & Abel, Noah or Abraham; the collective redemption era of Jacob's 12 sons, Moses' leading the Israelites out of Egypt, David & the prophets; and the universal redemptive era of Jesus, the Apostles and their missionary efforts among the gentiles.

This small but critical concept can be understood in several ways, as discussed earlier. We next examine the implications of the three perspectives of the *imago dei* on human organizing.

The Substantive view and the Fact of Organizing

From this perspective, we consider the various attributes or characteristics of God the Creator that are reflected in the human creature. While few would consider the *physical* make-up of humans to reflect God's own manifestation, humans are more likely to reflect the psychological and spiritual image of their creator². Among these divinely-imparted attributes are a sense of morality, fairness or justice; creativity and innovativeness; reason, intelligence and rationality; efficiency and stewardship; and even love (see I John 4: 7-21, especially). This is the view of the *imago dei* adopted by many of the Protestant reformers. Indeed, as Murphy states it:

Luther and Calvin subscribed to what is commonly referred to as the “relic” or “remnant” theory of the image of God, namely that, although the entire constitutive nature of man has been horribly mangled by the fall, the *imago Dei* has not been completely eviscerated. Rather, a *remnant* of the divine image remains in man.³

While Calvin admired the image of God in man in his pre-fall and redeemed (through the atoning blood of Christ) states, he is especially skeptical of fallen man's ability to reflect much of anything that resembles the Creator:

In the mind perfect intelligence flourished and reigned, uprightness attended as its companion, and all the senses were prepared and moulded for due obedience to reason; and in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this internal order. But now, although some obscure lineaments of that image are found remaining in us; yet are they so vitiated and maimed, that they may truly be said

² S. Gannon Murphy, “On the doctrine of the *imago dei*,” online article (2002) last accessed at <http://www.geocities.com/mnapologetics/ImagoDei.htm>, 24 June, 2003.

³ Murphy (2002).

to be destroyed. For besides the deformity which everywhere appears unsightly, this evil is also added, that no part is free from the infection of sin.⁴

While we have noted that several characteristics of humans are understood to be a reflection of God's nature, the one most central to the present discussion is order, which leads to our organizing activities. That is, as we take note of God's nature, being a Creator of order from chaos, and the Designer of all things, we note that, as humans reflect the image of their Maker, they, too, pursue order through structures and organizing efforts. This is the *fact* of organizing, and it occurs at several different levels of life.

Given that relative chaos occurs at all levels without the imposition of order, organizing activities seek to establish control over nature and creation. Such activities occur in the realm of social structures, economic markets, and governance of "organizations" (name removed, 2005).

Social Structures. Much of chaos-induced uncertainty is diminished through shared social structures. Classic writers such as Thomas Hobbes (1668) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1762) have observed that people voluntarily give up much of their God-given liberty (volition), enduring the trappings of organization in order to benefit from collective structures that better ensure their protection and comfort. Or, as Rousseau puts it, "man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains," (1762, p. xx), such chains being acceptable to the extent they ensure survival and flourishing. These chains, or social structures, take the form of institutions such as governments and cities, and they reflect the organizing efforts of people who recognize their vulnerability in the absence of compromise.

Economic Markets. Within a given society, and in fact across social orders, economic markets are in and of themselves evidence of orderliness (organizing) among economic actors.

⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (translated by John King), vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Books, 1981).

Beyond the obvious benefits of physical proximity, economic markets serve as clearinghouses for the information and knowledge that are critical to reducing the uncertainty inherent in chaotic settings. Austrian economists⁵ have stressed the ability of markets to act as coordinating mechanisms, given the dispersal of information and knowledge in society. In stating the nature of our challenge, Hayek suggests:

The peculiar character of the problem of a rational economic order is determined precisely by the fact that the knowledge of the circumstances of which we must make use never exists in concentrated or integrated form but solely as the dispersed bits of incomplete and frequently contradictory knowledge which all the separate individuals possess.⁶

Hayek further notes that the knowledge that is most critical in designing an efficient economic system is the unique knowledge held by economic actors regarding the small universe of information about price, economic value, production possibilities, and preferences that each of us brings to the marketplace. Stressing the dynamic and dis-ordered nature of de-centralized markets, Hayek states, "...the economic problem of society is mainly one of rapid adaptation to changes in the particular circumstances of time and place"⁷. The solution to these problems, notes Hayek, lies in the "marvelous" price mechanism that allows multiple economic actors to make rapid adjustments in their market activities on the basis of the information conveyed in the prices. In this way, economic markets provide a partial solution to the problems faced by humans engaged in the critical exchange of goods and services, with the price mechanism serving as a tool to be used and mastered in the pursuit of economic order.

⁵ The Austrian School of economists refers to a specific genre of economics that grew out of the work of Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek, Josef Schumpeter, Israel Kirzner, etc. The proponents of this school typically refer to markets as a process rather than a place, and they place great emphasis on innovation, discovery, and dis-equilibrium. This is in contrast to many other economists, who emphasize more static, equilibrium-based analysis of markets.

⁶ Friedrich A. von Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 77.

⁷ Hayek, (1948): 83.

Certainly, the price mechanism is relevant in competitive capitalist economies, but other economic systems provide order in different ways. In centrally-planned economies, a small body of decision-makers attempts to impose order by way of large-scale, “logical” resource allocation. Few examples exist, however, of central planners’ ability to successfully overcome the chaos that emerges in large societies absent a coordinating price mechanism.

Governance. Another powerful social institution aimed at facilitating economic activity in the face of chaotic tendencies is the development of organizations and the governance mechanisms they employ. Various theories of the firm exist, but the generally shared conclusion is that organizations exist to control resources and coordinate resource flows in such a way as to achieve a level of effectiveness and efficiency that is not possible in the absence of organizations. In this way, chaos and dis-order in the realm of finite market resources is reduced in ways that are beneficial to all social actors. One particularly powerful organizational theory that explores the governance benefits of hierarchies over markets is transaction cost economics.

Transaction cost economics (TCE) as espoused by Oliver Williamson has drawn on the work of Coase and Commons and others in order to explain the efficiency of organizational coordinating mechanisms⁸. Simply put, economic actors conduct various transactions in such a way as to minimize costs associated with exchanges. The uncertainty that arises from market complexity and chaos generates an incentive for some market actors to behave opportunistically and take advantage of unsuspecting or ignorant transaction partners. In order to reduce the likelihood of opportunism on the part of trading partners, firms employ costly monitoring and

⁸ Ronald H. Coase, "The nature of the firm," *Economica*, (1937) vol. 4: 386-405; John R. Commons, *Institutional Economics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1934); Oliver E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Anti-trust Implications* (NY: The Free Press, 1975); Oliver E. Williamson, *The economic institutions of capitalism: Firms, markets, relational contracting* (The Free Press, New York, 1985); Oliver E. Williamson and William G. Ouchi, "The markets and hierarchies and visible hand perspectives," in (Eds.) Andrew Van de Ven and William Joyce, *Perspectives on Organization Design and Behavior* (NY: Wiley, 1981), 347-370.

compliance mechanisms. When the mechanisms employed to monitor specific transactions become too costly, the transactions can be internalized within an organizational context, where internal hierarchy and structure govern transactions more efficiently. The key implication, of course, is that organizational structures and hierarchical governance can more efficiently facilitate transactions between market participants when complexity and chaos create costly uncertainty.

While many other theories of the firm address other aspects of the benefits of organizing, the common message is that hierarchy and structure allow economic actors to overcome the uncertainty and costs of dis-order to produce efficiency, innovation, stability, and a “life of man” that is something better than what Hobbes described as “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”

While not exhaustive, these organizing outcomes – social structures, economic markets, and organizational governance mechanisms/structures – constitute the fact of organizing, demonstrating the tendency of humans to engage in organizing activities in a way that reflects the image of their Creator, testament to the substantive view of the imago dei. In exploring the relational and functional and relational views of the imago dei, we get a better picture of the implications of organizing for managers and others in modern organizations.

The Relational and Functional views of Imago Dei – Their implications for modern organizing activities

Relational view – Man created in the image of God is held by some to mean that the special relational capabilities that humans possess are especially reflective of the nature of our Creator. In this relational view, God imparted at the time of creation only to those He created in

His image the unique ability to relate to him in presence (pre-fall), thought, prayer, and communion. This special relational aspect of man's created nature is critical to understanding the motive for redemption on the part of God. Further, this relational ability extends to human relationships. As originally created, humans had the ability to relate to one another in perfect harmony (even male and female!⁹), just as the three Persons of the Trinity relate in perfect harmony. In man's fallen state, it is only through Christ that we can relate in a meaningful way to both God and other humans. Bonhoeffer wrote:

We are separated from one another by an unbridgeable gulf of otherness and strangeness which resists all our attempts to overcome it by means of natural association or emotional or spiritual union. There is no way from one person to another. However loving and sympathetic we try to be, however sound our psychology, however frank and open our behavior, we cannot penetrate the incognito of the other man, for there are no direct relationships, not even between soul and soul. Christ stands between us, and we can only get in touch with our neighbors through him. That is why intercession is the most promising way to reach our neighbors, and corporate prayer, offered in the name of Christ, the purest form of fellowship.¹⁰

Functional view – Finally, the *Functional view* of imago dei places emphasis on the work that God has begun in His creation, and in which He expects humans to participate as partners, children, co-laborers. We have as a Divine example the cooperation of the Holy Trinity in the work of salvation and in creation (**scriptures here**). Humans are invited by God to be co-laborers by virtue of His mandate to subdue nature and be stewards of His creation (**scripture**). From this perspective we see how God would have us develop our own cooperative structures, our own organizing efforts. We see the role of hierarchy to be legitimated in this view, but God's model does not allow for exploitation and de-valuation of productive partners.

⁹ E.g., see Paul King Jewitt and Marguerite Schuster, *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996).

¹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1959), 98.

Thus, from this perspective, God's image is most accurately reflected in the things that created man *does*, especially insofar as man lives and acts according to the divine mandate. Humans reflect God's image to the extent that they obey the very commands of God and exercise dominion over the rest of creation (Erickson, 1998). Even in their fallen state, humans have been called back to God in a redeemed, covenant relationship, and His people reflect His image when they exercise dominion over all that He has given them, such as was the case of the Israelites taking control of the Promised land, and is now the case with Christians following the example of Jesus (thus, bearing the image of God) in obedience to His will and commands. Just as God has engaged in productive, creative work, those who bear His image are called to join with him in this work for the good of all.

Implications. While the relational view of imago dei emphasizes the relational nature of God and the primacy of relationships among His people, it is our contention that modern organizing philosophies and organizational structures have led to the diminishment of relational opportunities – and the productive aspect of human relationships – in favor of economic outcomes that satisfy consumeristic, materialistic tendencies of modern society. This is contrary to God's image, to His example, and to His will. A Christian theology of organizing must promote organizational structures that foster the relational element of the human condition. While modern (and many historic) organizing efforts have led to human alienation, we will consider the concept of organizational membership in the context of hierarchical relationships, as one example of how a Christian theological view of organizing may lead to different organizing activities and different structural outcomes.

Alienation in modern organizational life. Modern organizational structures – the natural outcome of organizing efforts – result in work processes that lead to a sense of alienation among organizational participants. The rise of capitalism and its never-ending search for efficiency has had enormously positive consequences for humankind in a material sense. And yet, while the negative consequences of capitalism have been documented elsewhere, we focus on the unintended alienation of the human worker trapped in the structures and processes of modern organizing efforts. For example, as Volf notes, “[Adam Smith] considered economic progress a necessary prerequisite for the progress of culture and civilization; and second, he believed that there can be no economic progress without division of labor, which causes alienation” (1991: 162). Division of labor is a central element to capitalist organization, and it has both positive and negative consequences. In Volf’s view, alienation occurs between an organizational participant and her colleagues, between the worker and his tasks, between the worker and the organizational entity, between the worker and herself, and – what is worst of all – between the worker and God.

More specifically, as Volf notes, workers are alienated from themselves in that they have little opportunity to make meaningful directional decisions, and they have little opportunity to develop in meaningful ways. They are also alienated from one another in the competitive environment that typifies most modern firms. Workers are alienated from the work itself, as well, to the extent that they are not able to see beyond the minor tasks associated with their areas of specialization. Finally, and most importantly, workers are alienated from God as the spiritual dimensions of work are muted by structures that diminish what it means to be *fully* human.

[More on alienation from Pope’s *Centesimus Annus*]

Alienation is found also in work when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor,

grows or diminishes as a person, either through increased sharing in a genuinely supportive community or through increased isolation in a maze of relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and estrangement, in which he is considered only a means and not an end. (493)

[More on alienation from Hardy's *Fabric of This World*]

An alternative organizing principle – From alienation to membership.

One of the most critical outcomes of organizing activities is to define what the boundaries of the organization are. Such boundaries delineate which resources are to be coordinated and controlled by organizational efforts and structures. The boundaries define how these resources are to be allocated and how they flow through course organizational processes. Organizational boundaries address property rights and task responsibilities. And most importantly for present purpose, the boundaries that are a natural outcome of organizing activities specify which people are part of the organizational entity and which are not. They define the nature of the interactions between people inside and outside of the boundaries. As a result, the boundaries associated with organizing play a role in the alienation process. Recognizing that God intended for humans to be highly connected to their work activities (as in the functional view of imago dei) and their work partners (as in the relational view of the imago dei), a Christian perspective of organizing must at least explore alternative organizing mechanisms – structures that promote the producer, not the product. We believe the development of organizational membership as a framework moves in this direction.

"Membership" grows out of the relational aspect of the Imago Dei. God is not simply the cosmic Law-giver; he is also our Father, Brother and Comforter. God is a personal God. As creatures in His image, we, too, are personal beings. What does it mean to be "personal?" To be personal is the opposite of being impersonal. To be personal entails recognizing the other person (as a person) and requires knowing the other person—and treating them in light of this specific

knowledge. It is to connect with and relate to someone directly and intimately. It is to engage in dialogue and relationship with another person. To fail to treat people as persons is to dishonor and dehumanize them.

How does this apply to organizing? What would a "personal" organization look like? Given that organizations are comprised of people, who are all personal beings, that means organizations are fundamentally relational constructs. Within an organization there will be personal relationships among the members. And no doubt the organization can inhibit or encourage the development of such relationships. But do people form “personal connections/relationships” with organizations? The notion of membership would say; yes! Membership can be viewed as some level of personal identification with the collective enterprise. But of course not everyone personally identifies with their organization. So what sets those who do apart from those who don't? And who would be a member? Which led to considering the various stakeholders and participants in the organization.

In trying to flesh out a more personal approach to organizing, we offer a new "spin" on some classic management insights which inform a membership model of organization.¹¹

Not every stakeholder would be a member (or even want to be). But an organization is dependent upon crafting a workable coalition among the vital stakeholders in order to thrive. But who are the "vital stakeholders" and how are their interests addressed by the organization? Not every shareholder wants to be actively involved in the organization's governance, let alone management (witness the low rates of proxy voting). But some do. Not every employee identifies with the company or is committed to its mission. But some are. Not every customer wants to help refine the next generation of products; but some do. Not every supplier is willing to

¹¹ Although not touched on it here, this "personal" line of thinking also has interesting potential for rethinking how we understand leadership and motivation... but that's another story.

seamlessly hard-wire their production system into yours; but some are. The ones who are committed to the organization are different from those who aren't—and should be treated differently. They are the true "vital stakeholders" an organization must retain... because they are members of the productive system that IS the organization.

Building on a stakeholder vision of the range of vested interests in an organization, we are attempting to craft a more collaborative and personal organization. To do so, we need to incorporate and synthesize several unrelated considerations. First, Williamson's distinction between markets and hierarchies as alternative means of dealing with organizational transactions can be usefully employed to delineate between "insider" and "outsider" stakeholders. Those stakeholders who simply transact with the organization can be relegated to the "market" of competing alternatives. Their interests are sufficiently addressed and protected by the natural controls of market dynamics. Other stakeholders, who have made long-term commitments to the organization, deserve to be treated differently (i.e., they have chosen to identify with the organization and link their well-being to that of the collective). Such relationships cannot be sufficiently protected nor nurtured via market mechanisms. These "insiders"-- or organizational "members"-- need to be treated differently. They comprise the true "heart" of the organization; and their interests need to be heard and built into the very governance structure of the organization. Here Hirshmann's notion of "exit, voice, loyalty and neglect" provides a useful framework for designing means for incorporating (i.e., not neglecting) members' interests into the operation of the firm such that loyalty is developed. While one is free to exit market-based transactions (and doing so provides significant leverage and power in such exchanges), the commitment inherent in "membership relationships" is thwarted if they are not provided with significant opportunities to "voice" their concerns in an efficacious manner. Providing such voice

goes a long way towards building loyalty and pre-empting the loss of vital stakeholders due to the frustration of neglect and their eventual exit.

The task of re-thinking an organization as a collaborative effort among various "members" raises the issue of devising a range of "voice" opportunities and mechanisms for members to be included in the governance and general control of the firm. Williamson's dichotomous distinction between markets vs. hierarchies is too narrow. We propose a third alternative mode of managing transactions, or relationships, among organizational members. While markets are okay for outsiders, hierarchies are not relationally rich enough for members. Since hierarchies are relationships inherently based upon a concentration of power in the hands of the few who exercise authority over the many, they are not conducive to the more collaborative relationship necessary among "members." Therefore, we need to expand Williamson's typology to include another form of "internalized" relationship to manage "members". Membership relationships are based upon commitment and contribution to the productive activities of the enterprise. Members are those who choose to personally-identify with the organization and/or its mission/purpose. One can be a reluctant worker in a hierarchy (toil?); but one chooses to be a member. And while membership and commitment have long been fundamental concerns in the non-profit realm, in the age of "volunteer" organizations and the need for successful collaboration among various stakeholders, the same concept is eminently useful in for-profit business organizations as well.

Note that since membership is defined in terms of commitment to the organization (rather than stock ownership or even employment status), then the "membership" demarcation line runs right through, not around, every stakeholder group. Some employees will be members, other will not. Some customers will be members; others will not. Some suppliers will be members; others

will not. Some stockholders will be members, others will not. For too long we have conferred control based upon ownership of capital. In an era where competitive advantage is rooted in the effective collaboration between capital and labor; between customers and company; and among supply-chain participants, we can no longer afford to marginalize any of these core "members" of the organization. Their interests need to be actively protected, their ideas sought, their concerns addressed, their commitment honored, and their contributions recognized and rewarded.

In short, understanding stakeholders is important; but crafting an effective means of incorporating the subset of stakeholders who are members is critical. Their voice matters more than the exit of transient outsiders. They need more than proxy rights to feel part of the organization. Different groups will have different domains of concern, within which they need to have some amount of discretion and control. Seeing organizations as a collaboration of contributions among various committed stakeholder-members changes our perspective and opens a range of new possibilities for inclusion and participation. It redefines the rights and responsibilities associated with being a member (vs. an owner) of the organization. And it helps clarify whose voice is heard and heeded among the interests competing for attention.

People were made to connect; to live in relationship (to God and others); and they were made to work. These are our "theologically-informed" starting assumptions. Therefore, our institutions and organizations need to recognize and reflect this reality. To deny or neglect these facts is to instigate and/or perpetuate the alienation of people from their true nature and from their purpose.

Conclusion

Having discussed the illumination provided by an understanding of the *imago dei* on the fact of organizing and on the appropriateness of particular structural arrangements, we turn in our conclusion to future possibilities in this area, including the delineation of related by distinct concepts such as order, chaos, structure and design. For example, it is possible that order is the natural relation of created things to one another, while structure is humans tend to relate these things in their organizing efforts. At times, we get it right. Other times our structuring is contrary to the natural order, and to God's intended design. Further, while we recognize that God's example is to create order out of chaos, and humans reflect his image in this regard through organizing tendencies, at the same time we see God's creative nature as utilizing relatively chaotic canvasses to create ordered masterpieces. In other words, without chaos, there can be no relative order, and creativity often requires the development of relative chaos in order to upset the status quo. These issues will be offered as invitations for future discussions.

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